RESTORATION REVIEW

The Lord is near; have no anxiety, but in everything make your requests known to God in prayer and petition with thanksgiving. Then the peace of God, which is beyond our utmost understanding, will keep guard over your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6, 7 (NEB)

See article, "What Prayer Should Mean To Us," page 113.

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Volume 8, No. 6 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **June 1966**

BROTHER LOVELL AND CHURCH OF CHRIST MISSIONS

The purpose of this editorial is to make some observations relative to missionary activity among Churches of Christ, offering both commendations and criticisms that we trust will prove helpful. We are especially concerned with viewpoints and practices that reflect both immature and inconsistent thinking. Some of our ways and means of missionary work not only make us appear self-righteous, but actually impede the cause of Christ in foreign lands. And yet there is much to commend.

The title should not be taken to mean that we are suggesting that *all* or even most missionary activity is centered in the work of brother Jimmie Lovell. We realize that many of our congregations function apart from his program in missionary enterprises. And yet the story of Church of Christ missions in our generation certainly begins with his labors, and it is our intention to restrict our remarks to his work. This is due in part to some recent correspondence I have had with brother Lovell, to which I shall be making reference.

To most Church of Christ people James I. Lovell needs no introduction. He is known mainly as one deeply devoted to the cause of missions and to projects related thereto. His organ, a magazine called *Action*, is widely circulated among our churches, and it is staffed by zealous writers who are almost as eager for the Church of Christ to convert the world as he is. He is forever pushing some highly commendable project, all the way from enrolling youth in an “I don’t smoke” club to a “miss a meal” program for brethren generally. The latter calls upon people to miss at least one meal a week, and send the money saved to him for missions. *Action* is well named, for it vibrates with the personality of its editor. It is tangy and exciting, and is obviously good tonic for a people given to lethargic ways.

In most respects brother Lovell is unerringly traditional as an editor of a Church of Christ journal, so much so that he can hardly be expected to venture too far from the secure confines of Church of Christism. And yet there is an unpredictability about him, and he sometimes says things that are both dangerous and heretical. There has been enough of this that I fear the keepers of orthodoxy have enough rope to hang him high on

Haman's gallows if he should ever jump the traces completely. I recall that back in 1955 when he was summarizing the events in Church of Christ history for that year that he made a statement to the effect that the most disgraceful thing to happen in the brotherhood in recent years was when brethren jailed Leroy Garrett in Henderson, Tenn. That was one of his dangerous statements!

I get the impression that brother Lovell is torn between a deep love and devotion for his Lord and a traditionalism that he holds in suspect but dares not let go. In reality he is too big a person to make a good party man, and he would certainly find distasteful any suggestion that his labors are sectarian in nature, and yet he is reluctant to question our brazen insinuation both at home and on the mission field that we and only we are "the church" of the New Testament and the only Christians.

I have a deep admiration for brother Lovell, not only for his editorial and missionary endeavors, for which he is justly praised by many, but because he has demonstrated that a layman with a busy and responsible position can at the same time assume leadership in the church. I am using "layman" advisedly, for I have long since conceded to logic that we have a clergy just as much as most other churches. But Jimmie Lovell is not to be numbered among our professional class of ministers. He was for many years a top representative for DuPont, but all that time he edited a paper and served as an anchor man for many projects in the brotherhood, especially missionary enterprises. Now that he has retired from DuPont he devotes himself entirely to his labor of love. And if I understand correctly, he has done all this at his own expense, never being on salary with any church. There are far too few instances of this in our brotherhood.

A history of our brotherhood in this generation would be incomplete without an extensive reference to Jimmie Lovell. If I should write that history, I would entitle one chapter "The Enigma of James I. Lovell," and while I would give proper attention to everything from his "miss a meal" project to his supervision of very large sums of missionary money, I would raises the one big question about Jimmie Lovell that any critical historian would ask. This would point to a most glaring inconsistency in our practice, for while we have made missionary societies a test of fellowship, even to the point of rejecting brethren that support them, we have in fact allowed brother Lovell to set up his own missionary society.

Perhaps we have done no wrong in doing this, but it is wrong for us to reject as brethren (we call them brethren in error.') those Christians who believe in missionary societies whose funds and activities are always under the close scrutiny of the church, while we allow a single man to have similar responsibilities, but whose missionary program is not so much as under the control of a local eldership. A missionary society's function is to encourage zeal for missions among the churches, raise money, select and advise missionaries, and watch for their welfare in the field. The money is sent to the

society, which in turn is responsible for directing it into those areas where it is most needed; and it is the society, of course, that has control of the money, even though its books are always under the surveilance of other officials. Churches of Christ have always vigorously opposed the likes of this, insisting that it is unscriptural. Yet we have Jimmie Lovell, who has similar functions and influence, including the control of large sums of money, but who is responsible to no one.

It shows what the zeal of one man can do, but it also shows how grossly inconsistent a people can become. Even if brother Lovell should conduct his missionary program "under the oversight of an eldership" (a cliche unique with us), it would not change the fact of inconsistency, for one church could serve as a missionary society as well as one man. The truth is that we are growing, we are interested in missions, and somebody has to do what a missionary society does. If we choose to have brother Lovell and a few other energetic men do this on a kind of self-appointed basis, I have no particular protest to make; but in doing so let us quietly drop our references to those who have missionary societies as "digressive brethren."

An illustration will point up what I mean. Recently I sent a donation to the Christian Missionary Fellowship, a society maintained by independent Christian Church brethren for the support of missionaries. I asked that the money should be used to support brother Martin Mitchum, who is now laboring for the Lord in Ethiopia as an engineer among missionaries. This society raised the money for Martin's journey to Ethiopia and persuaded churches and individuals to pledge for his support while over there. All this money comes into the society. They supervise the fund for Marrin Mitchum, always making sure that he will be cared for financially. If a church quits sending to the society for Marrin, the society will draw upon other funds to make sure of a faithful commitment to the missionary. And the society has on hand in Martin's fund enough money to make it possible for him to come home at once in case of emergency. They issue a journal that keeps brethren posted on all missionary activities.

Now most of my Church of Christ brethren believe this is wrong. And yet it would be all right to send the same amount of money to Jimmie Lovell and designate it for some missionary that he is watching after, like the society, Jimmie has a *Missionary Directory,* and like the society he has a paper that keeps people posted. The main difference is that Jimmie's setup is much more vulnerable. What if he should drop dead? Suppose he were dishonest. And there is the pragmatic value of a society that is set up especially for a missionary enterprise being able to function more effectively than anyone man could be expected to. The society can deal with our government and with foreign governments and with language schools, and a hundred other things, more effectively. At least we should be able to see how some brethren *prefer* a missionary society, believing it to be more responsible in every way, and thus more scriptural.

And yet I wish for brother Lovell every blessing, and I have nothing but commendation for those who choose to have fellowship with our brethren in foreign fields through brother Lovell's agency. God bless everyone of them! And God bless the missionaries! And God bless brother Lovell! What I am fussing about is that some of the very missionaries that Jimmie is serving will have nothing to do with other missionaries because they are sent out by a society! And even brother Lovell, as wonderful as he is in so many ways, makes things like missionary societies a test of fellowship. If we were consistent, we would all have to withdraw from each other, including Jimmie Lovell withdrawing from Jimmie Lovell!

Brother Lovell has some strange notions about what some of us are trying to do in our unity efforts, which are penetrating missionary activities. In a recent communication he expressed his conviction that I am wrong in what he described as "your unlimited reaches of fellowship." What idea does my dear brother have about what I am trying to do? *Unlimited?* This would mean, I suppose, that I consider everything from a Unitarian to a Universalist, along perhaps with Buddhists and Muslims, as being within the fellowship of Christ!

The truth is that the historian of tomorrow who is tracing the literary history of Churches of Christ will be hard put to find any editor in our entire history that has placed greater stress upon a fellowship based upon the belief of the one *fact,* that Jesus is the Christ, and obedience to the one *act,* immersion into Christ, than have I, unless it would be Alexander Campbell himself. I have repeatedly made it clear that if I were an elder in a congregation I would not accept anyone into the fellowship who had not been immersed into Christ. I have had letters from some of our more "liberal" brethren suggesting that I injure my plea for unity in insisting upon immersion as a condition of Christian fellowship.

Surely brother Lovell did not get an idea of "unlimited reaches of fellowship" from reading this journal, which he receives. What then is the real import of this kind of statemen! about fellowship? I am afraid my fellow editor really means that I am "unlimited" in the sense that I accept as brothers in the Lord all those that have been baptized into Christ, something that brother Lovell and many missionaries will not do.

Withou t endorsing instrumental music in worship, I acknowledge as brethren beloved those who do, and I make no difference between instrumentalists and non-instrumentalists in terms of Christian fellowship. I do not call one group "brethren in error" and the others "loyal brethren." All my brethren, including myself, are *brothers in error,* for none is right about everything. So it is with brethren who are premillennial. They are no less my fellow saints. I can honor them as brethren in the Lord without endorsing any error I may suppose they adhere to. So it is with liberals and conservatives, cooperatives and independents,

class and non-class, and all the rest. They are all my brothers in HIM, and I love and respect them because of the holy relationship that they sustain to the Father.

For this reason I can live with, work with, pray with, study with any or all of them. I can call on one to lead a prayer in the assembly, or to deliver a discourse, as well as the next one. They are my brothers, not because they happen to agree with me on a long list of doctrinal interpretations, but because we are sons of the same heavenly Father.

Brother Lovell, however, is raising hundreds of thousands of dollars to go into missionary enterprises only for "loyal" Church of Christ missionaries. And a "loyal" missionary has no fellowship with a premillennialist or with an evangelist that is sent out by instrumentalists or even our own conservative group. And Jimmie challenges me to get all these different groups to help him build churches in Korea, if they are so interested in a unity project. I have replied that I would be delighted to do this if I could be assured that a building that *all* our segments financed could be used by *all* of them, and that no lines of fellowship would be drawn. I did not get that assurance. Jimmie wants all of us to erect a building in Korea, but when the work is finished a premillennial brother could not even make a talk in it, nor would a Christian Church preacher be called on to lead a prayer!

What troubles Jimmie Lovell about my position is not so much that mine is *unlimited,* but that his is *limited* to a narrow sectarianism, a Church of Christism. I make nothing a test of fellowship that God has not made a condition of being saved. I accept all immersed believers as my brothers in Christ, with none looked upon as a half brother or a second cousin. Brother Lovell makes a difference. He limits the fellowship not only to those who have believed in Christ and obeyed Him, as Mk. 16:16 indicates he should, but also to those who agree with him on such things as instrumental music, missionary societies, and the millennium.

Brother Lovell insists that I am wrong. Will I become right by drawing the line of fellowship on those that have obeyed the same gospel I have and who serve the same Christ I do? Must men agree with me about a lot of *things* and *opinions,* interpretations that the church has always had disagreements about, before I can treat them as brothers? Jimmie opposes me because of "the unlimited reaches of fellowship" when this means only that I accept as brothers *all* who are in Christ.

If "the unlimited reaches of fellowship" means that I enjoy fellowship with all who are in Christ, then I must plead guilty. I can only respond with a fond hope that brother Lovell will cease placing limitations that God has not placed and making laws on fellowship that God has not made. I choose to be a free man in Christ. Perhaps this makes me "wrong" by sectarian standards.

I can only conclude that brother Lovell, being the man of virtue that he is, is a big person trying to be a little sectarian. It does not become him. I might warn him, however, that he had better watch his missionaries.

Many of them are likely to jump the traces — *sectarian* traces I mean, of course. The Holy Spirit is at work among our missionaries, and Christian freedom is finding expression in many places. Orthodoxy had better watch out!

I should add in closing that I notice in Jimmie's *Missionary Directory* some premillennial brethren are listed, and he defends this in his preface. But I've already said, haven't I, that he does some unpredictable and dangerous things? And the keepers of orthodoxy have a way of keeping score. So watch and pray, brother Lovell, lest … —*the Editor*

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RESPONSE FROM READERS

Have a wonderful, wonderful time in Bethany! Be sure to write the details for those of us who cannot get there. Our thoughts and prayers go with you. Good for Ouida for going along! —*Colorado*

(We plan to write about the Bethany meeting in the September issue. —*Editor)*

I am very pleased with your periodical and with the good it is doing. I hope I have changed my way of thinking toward others who are in Christ. I realize that I have a long way to go, but with the Lord's help I will make progress. —*Washington*

I enjoy very much reading your publication. Not that I always agree with your thinking, but that you allow the right to disagree. Only by this attitude can brethren ever approach dwelling in unity as God's family. —*Michigan*

We both admire you for the work you are doing and we are seeing many direct changes in the Church of Christ. For you and men like you we say Hurray! —*Kansas*

The March issue was handed me by a friend, and I enjoyed reading it so much I wish to subscribe for the year. —*California*

It appears to me that you are seeking to attain that for which Campbell strove, namely the unity of God's people, but that you are endeavoring to accomplish it exactly by opposite means. He endeavored to bring people out of denominationalism, where as it seems you are agreeable to their remaining in it. —*Texas*.

(I most certainly seek to lead people out of sectarianism, but this does not necessarily mean they have to leave their denomination, whether it be Baptist or Church of Christ. One might be in a sect without being a sectarian. One does not "leave denominationalism" simply by changing churches, even when he changes to the *right* (?) church. It is the right relationship with Christ that delivers one from sectarianism, and I desire to deliver all from this evil. Campbell's basis for unity was the Lordship of Christ, not doctrinal conformity. This is my position. —Editor)

From some of the reports that I have heard you can be sure that you are having a real influence among large groups of Church of Christ people. One preacher I talked to had just returned from Lubbock Christian College and he could not say "Leroy Garrett" with enough bitterness to suit him. I can only encourage you to keep working and to assure you that we pray for you often. I do hope that more of our brethren learn to really know Jesus and to experience the workings of the Spirit in their lives. —*Oregon*

(We want to thank all those who are praying for us and for our work in *Restoration Review.* We urge all our readers who believe in the power of prayer to pray for the union of all believers, and that this journal may be used in such a glorious work. —*Editor*)

I especially enjoyed your article on *The Gift of the Holy Spirit.* Robert Myers' article should be helpful to the young preachers and others who have not yet been exposed to such thinking. He's a sportwriter! —*New Mexico*

I like your style. Far too much discussion of divisive issues is in grim, ponderous humorlessness. The rapier of wit can do more than the bludgeon of logic. And perhaps the needle of irony can do better. —*Nebraska*

Your article on The Gift of the Holy Spirit is tops. Your keen analysis of the problems we face within Churches of Christ needs to be admitted by all of us. Recently I heard a C of C preacher on the radio on this very subject. He spent about two-thirds of his time saying what the Holy Spirit did not do. It was quite obvious that his guns were trained on the Holiness groups . . . I also enjoyed Robert Meyers' penetrating article *Custom or Command.* He writes with much insight into our problems. —*Louisiana*

I was pleased to hear of your trip to ACC, though I can't share the full measure of your optimism about its implications. Clearly, you could hardly expect a tumultuous welcome at ole DLC, which will be one of the last bastions of the old ways, even more now than ever before. But keep it up! I admire your pluck, envy your perseverance, and especially covet your faith. Yours is a voice of concern, mine of despair. —*Tennessee*

(No, no! Let us never despair. The prophet Jeremiah was sure there wasn't a real man in all Jerusalem, and he went through the streets looking for one, just to prove his point. He just knew there wasn't even one. And yet when he was brought before the Jewish clergy and was about to be put to death, enough young princes rose up in his defense that the clergy was forced to back down. Warning to DLC: *watch out for the young princes!* —*Editor*)

Let me pass an interesting incident about your paper along to you. One of my preaching friends has wondered aloud to me, "What is wrong with Leroy Garrett? He must be crazy or something." Well, sir, just the other day he was using my telephone and noticed a copy of *Restoration Review* nearby. On the cover I had written *see page* 27. He turned and read it. He came to me open-mouthed and told me there just wasn't a thing in

that article he could disagree with. The article? "Fellowship and Brothers in Error." — *Canada*

(My problem is not so much with those who *read* what I write, but with those who don't or won't. —*Editor*)

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BROTHER BALES AND "VOICES OF CONCERN"

In a recent issue of *Action,* published by James Lovell, Prof. James D. Bales of Harding College suggested to the brotherhood that it would be well if some of our scholars could be provided with such financial resources that they could devote more of their time to research and writing. He mentioned in particular that somebody ought to review every chapter of *Voices of Concern,* and the implication was that if enough money were available such things as this could be done.

I can appreciate the problem that brother Bales refers to, for I too find it difficult to do research and writing, along with editing this journal, while serving as a university professor, not to mention part-time responsibilities in a pilot course at our local high school. And when one adds ministerial responsibilities to various congregations to that, it is confusing as to just how many jobs he does have. Ouida affirms that it is *three* jobs, and not just two as I usually number them.

So I know what brother Bales means. We could all do so much better if we had more time. Or could we? It may be our involvement in the onrushing world that gives our writing what little substance it does have. And brother Bales gets a lot done too, and he does it well. He invested a lot of time on the Altizer affair, and he came near getting what he wanted, it seems. It is probable that most of us get done what we really want to do. So I am persuaded it will not take a financial grant from some foundation for a few of the professors to get around to reviewing *Voices of Concern.* Brother Bales himself can find time for it if he really wants to do it. Here is hoping he will want to, and we stand ready to make it as convenient for him as possible.

There is one thing about his comments in *Action* that disturbs me, however. Here is a renowned professor in one of our colleges, a Ph.D., a man trained to be objective and calculating in his approach to problems, who speaks of answering every chapter of a book that at the time had not even been published. He had not even seen the book and had not read one word of it, and yet he wanted somebody to answer every chapter of it! How did he know but what he would agree with it, or at least some of it? Is this the kind of liberal education that students are exposed to at Harding College? Does not an educated person approach a thesis or a book with an open mind, giving its propositions a fair and impartial

investigation? Once he has studied the material and passed judgment upon it, it is then appropriate for him to call upon someone to answer it. Brother Bales, bless his heart, was asking for money to reply to a book that didn't even exist!

This is not a particularly important matter, and I do not intend to be making roo much of it, but little things like this can be very revealing of the kind of people we have allowed ourselves to become. It is typical of our Church of Christ mentality to negate anything that holds promise of being the least bit critical of our way of doing things. It was the same mentality that burned Wycliffe's translation of the scriptures without bothering to read it, or that condemns a man without first giving him a fair trial.

It is *assumed* that if anything is critical of the Church of Christ it must be fostered by ulterior motives, and is thus to be treated as some threat to our well-being. Criticism is rejected as if it were by its very nature evil. It is something that must be "answered" even before it is heard, somewhat like physicians view preventive. medicine.

It would suggest much more maturity on our part if some of our college professors or editors issued complaints of a lack of criticism, perhaps even to the point of suggesting the raising of funds to assist those who might be willing to write helpful criticism of our system.

Well, *Voices of Concern* is now published and is being widely read. If brother Bales still wants to review it, we invite him to do so in the pages of this journal. We will allow him two full pages each month through six issues, 12 pages in all. And that might be extended beyond six issues if it seems wise to all concerned. We will invite someone else, perhaps Bob Meyers, editor of the book, or the writer whose article is under consideration, or perhaps Carl Ketcherside, the publisher of the book, to make reply with equal space. We would be pleased if the same material could be published in some journal that brother Bales writes for, but we will not make this a condition.

Speaking of Carl Ketcherside as a possible respondent to James Bales' evaluations, I have a letter from brother Bales in which he expresses a willingness to enter into a written discussion with brother Ketcherside on these issues, perhaps in the form of a book. But he says he is not interested in any face-to-face encounter such as the contest with Altizer would have been. We are pleased to accept his preferences in this regard and only hope that some kind of *written* discussion might materialize. We might start things off with a discussion of *Voices of Concern*, whether with Ketcherside or with others connected with the book.

It must be conceded, however, to be a bit strange that Bales is so eager to have a discussion with Altizer, even to the point of trying to pressure him into it, and regarding a matter that is more of a fad than an issue, being one that almost nobody believes; while at the same time having no interest in a similar type discussion with Ketcherside. Brother

Lovell asks some embarrassing questions along this line in a recent issue of *Action.* He asks: Are we Goliaths in some areas and cowards in others?"

Brother Lovell points out that nobody in the Church of Christ could have much concern for such an absurd notion that God is dead, but that the issues raised by Ketcherside are of great concern to many in our own midst. He says: "Brother Ketcherside's influence in religious circles would make Dr. Altizer appear as an amateur." He strongly implies that if brother Bales has such a hankering to take on someone, why doesn't he accept the challenge brother Ketcherside his issued to brother Lemmons (for a discussion at one of the Christian colleges), which Lovell assumes could be passed along to Bales.

His remark that men are like Goliaths in some circumstances and cowards at other times may be a bit harsh, if he means to apply that to brother Bales. I do not believe that James D. Bales is a coward, and I see no particular virtue in being like Goliath.

We hope we may soon provide for our readers some kind of dialogue between brother Bales and some of those responsible for *Voices of Concern.* I have not asked either Bob Meyers or Carl Ketcherside if they would be interested in this king of exchange, nor any of the essayists for that matter, but I am confident that some of them would be glad to exchange views with Bales on "this most vital question," to use Lovell's description. If none cares to reply, we will let Bales write on, maybe as long as he cares to, for we are eager for our readers to see what he has to say, whether anyone responds or not.

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A DEFLATED EGO!

A sister who has been reading the history of the Restoration Movement sends this amusing comment:

> I must confess I was most ignorant concerning the beginnings of the group with which I am affiliated, except I thought it was started in 30 A.D. Imagine my great surprise to learn we really came by way of the Baptists and Presbyterians!
>
> It is a jolt-and some of my brethren refuse to believe it. It is amazing how much I have learned since I thought I already had all the answers. What a blow to my ego!

While she is poking fun at herself (a sign of good emotional health, by the way, to be able to do that), she is partly serious. Being the well-read person that she is, she is well aware that the congregation of Christ became a reality sometime around 30 A.D. It is what we might call "the fallacy of the loyal church" that the good sister is trying to overcome. While Christ's church does indeed go back 1900 years into history, it is rather presumptuous for anyone group within Christendom to lay claim to being that one and

only church. It is especially hazardous when that group itself is divided several ways, each claiming to be the loyal church.

One does not have to read far in the history of our Movement before he realizes that those things that are *unique* about the Church of Christ go no further back into history than the middle of the last century. The name that we use, exclusive to all others, doesn't even go back as far as the beginnings of the Restoration Movement. We were called *Disciples*, *Reformers*, and *Christians* back in those days, not to mention *Campbellites*, while the name "Church of Christ" was at first almost never used. A congregation among us now that would try to use anything else would not only be a rarity, but would also be held in suspicion.

So it is with such novel ideas as "the plan of salvation" with its four clearly defined steps; our use of Acts 20:7 to make the Supper a *must* for every Sunday and *only* Sunday; our use of 1 Cor. 16:2 to make a collection of money not only "an item of worship," but a matter of law for every Sunday morning service. Added to these marks of distinction is our strange notion that the fellowship of the saints is contingent upon unanimity of interpretation of a large body of doctrines, whether it be the use of instrumental music, the rule of elders, or the millennium.

One might trace a few of these odd interpretations back into history for two or three generations, but the effort to establish them as *primitive* or *apostolic* is indeed futile. What is different about the Church of Christ does not much belong to history. We continue to create new patterns of practice, however gradual and subtle, while insisting all along that we are apostolic in every detail. No one seems to question things like two services on, Sunday, which comes close to being two congregations in one, and a second serving of the Supper at night, at which time only a few partake. We may assume they are apostolic since we practice them, and thus go deep into history.

Other things might well be considered both historical and apostolic (other religious groups seem to think so), which we neatly and summarily dismiss for one reason or another: the holy kiss, foot washing, the anointing of oil, solo singing, tongues, and ministering elders (who did not hire evangelists to do it for them). Hardly anyone makes more of *congregational* singing than we do, or who does more of it, and yet the Bible that does refer to *solo* singing does, not once allude to *mass* singing. I recall asking a New Testament scholar at Harvard if he could find evidence of mass singing in a congregation in New Testament times. He acknowledged that it could not be found in the New Testament itself, but pointed to Suetonius, a pagan source, as an indication that it might have been practiced ("They sing hymns to one Chrestus who was crucified").

I am only saying that we have allowed ourselves to become an oddity, a people who will not dare allow someone to sing a solo during worship, for which we have Biblical precedence, and insist that the singing must be in mass, for which we have no clear

precedence. And yet we draw the line of fellowship on our brothers who assume the same liberty we do in having congregational singing, but who also take the liberty to play a piano along with it. We say one is scriptural and the other isn't. The truth is that neither is scriptural!

This history bit is in the same category. We suppose that if we are the true people of God that we must be able to identify ourselves in every detail with primitive Christianity. Any admission that we as a distinct religious body began only about the time of Alexander Campbell would be devastating to our religion. And we see that such a revelation injured the ego of the sister who wrote the letter above. We are known for the courage of our convictions. When we become known for the courage to *examine* our convictions, our egos will be less vulnerable to stark reality.

Are we really so deceived on this score that we would expect an encyclopedia, if it were really truthful, to include the Churches of Christ in its treatment of Christianity, while excluding all other churches as sects?

It should be enough if we could think of ourselves as a people even better as a *Movement* within the ecclesia of God, with some ideas to contribute for the improvement of Christianity. To *equate* ourselves with Christianity, while consigning all others to second-class citizenship in God's kingdom at best, is sheer folly. It is reasonable and proper, however, for us as a distinct people to be at work within the congregation of Christ at large, laboring for deeper spirituality, a greater sense of brotherhood, and a restoration of unity of all believers. And of course for better insights into the teachings of the New Covenant scriptures. There is much that we can contribute to Christendom, or at least share in contributing.

And that this particular effort with its distinct emphases should date back no further than the 1800's is perfectly in order. Let us think of ourselves as raised up by God at a particular moment in the church's history to do a work that no one else may do. We can have a high and holy mission without claiming to be the only grandchildren that the apostles have!

We might be able to look at it that way and still keep our egos in tact. —*the Editor*

Paul advised the Corinthians to contribute on the first day regularly, but there the phrase implies that each is to lay it aside at home. —*Crozier Theological Review*, Vol. 21, p. 248

The question of bread for myself is a material question, but the question of bread for my neighbors, for everybody, is a spiritual and a religious question. —*Nicholas Berdyaev*

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"How Vast the Resources of His Power …" No. 6

WHAT PRAYER SHOULD MEAN TO US

Those of us who have come to understand ourselves a little better appreciate the prayer of Agur in Proverbs 30. "Two things I ask of thee," he says to God, "deny them not to me before I die."

Remove far from me falsehood and lying;
Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with the food that is needful for me,
Lest I be full, and deny thee,
And say, "Who is the Lord?"
Or lest I be poor, and steal,
And profane the name of my God.

This prayer not only expresses wisdom, which gained a place for it in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament covenant, but it also goes far in serving as a model prayer for all people. Let us notice a few of the lessons it teaches about meaningful prayer.

1. *Prayer should be related to the discipline of self-scrutiny.*

We have to admire Agur for his self-integrity. He was acquainted with his weaknesses and he knew where he was vulnerable. Perhaps some men can get rich and keep their heads too, but Agur figured he could not. So he prayed that he not be given riches, lest he become self-sufficient and deny God. Neither did he figure he had the strength to endure poverty, and so he asked only for "the food that is needful for me."

The old boy knew something about the psychology of man. He understood human nature. If he were to become rich, he could see himself saying, as he had heard other foolish men say who had become wealthy: "Who is the Lord?" If he were to be in poverty, he could see himself driven to thievery, as often happens when men are caught by the jaws of adverse circumstance.

Agur was not a determinist who believes that man is a slave to his environment, or that he is driven by the blind forces of circumstance. Man need not steal just because he is poor, and he need not forget God when he becomes rich. But Agur was a realist. He knew men and he knew himself. He knew *life,* and he learned it by living in our kind of a world- a world in which men are usually made worse by poverty, not better; and a world in which men are usually made worse by riches, not better.

Most of us will pay lip service to Agur's wisdom, but nearly all of us believe that if *we* were rich, we would be just as faithful to God as before. Neither do most of us have the slightest notion that poverty would turn us into thieves. We are aware that the glitter of riches lure many away from spiritual concerns and that the blight of penury drives many to despair, but we suppose we would be exceptions. We might be reluctant to *pray* for riches, but we think we could manage the money without it ruining us, should the Lord choose to give it.

Few of us would be content with "the food that is needful for me." We don't have to cut it that close to be true to the Lord! Agur is overdoing it, we would say. But Agur really wanted what was best for his soul. Do we? It is at this point that meaningful prayer begins.

Agur no doubt knew the story of Israel, and how God had warned them: "Take heed lest when your silver and gold is multiplied, then your heart will be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God." (Dt. 8:13-14) The Lord urged them to remember that it was He who gave them the power to get wealth, but they soon forgot and came to destruction.

Agur was honest with himself as well as with God. He knew something about what motivated him, and he could feel the strength of his drives and impulses. It was easy for him to be proud, and to love money and the power that it brings. He knew this. So he prayed for the simple life.

If in our prayers we could gain this kind of insight into ourselves, we too could pray more meaningfully. Job speaks of making a covenant with his eyes not to look upon a virgin. Is not this a strange kind of prayer? Cannot a man look at a virgin without sinning? Yes, but Job knew Job. A young woman might pray equally strangely when she says: "May that young man not ask me for another date, dear God." Really, he's a nice young man, cultured, rich, and educated; but she could tell by the first date that he would not be the kind of husband that would lead her life closer to God. Yet she was attracted to him. She might yield if he asked her out again, which might eventually lead to marriage. She knew herself, and she knew she could easily fall in love with him. So she asks God for help in stopping it before it gets started.

A woman left a widow asks God that she might not have to live with her children. Like Agur, she knows herself and her weaknesses-and she knows her children! Paul prayed that he might be delivered from unreasonable men, and he might have been thinking about how *he* might be tempted to behave in their company, as well as how they might behave toward him.

The basis of vital prayer is an impervious sense of need. Agur sought deliverance from that which would tend to make him independent of such a sense of need. He knew that riches not only encourage a false independence, but that they shackle a man to this earth. As William Barclay has put it: 'The danger of riches is that they tend to make a man forget

that he loses what he keeps, and he gains what he gives away." It seems that Agur wants to avoid the luxurious life that makes it difficult for one to die. So he prayed that God might create that circumstance in his life that would bring out the best in him.

2. *Prayer should be specific and direct.*

Agur prayed right to the point, more like the crack of a rifle than of shotgun fire. "Two things I ask of thee," he said as he began his prayer. He knew what he was going to say before he started. The great prayers of the Bible are specific in content. Hannah prayed for a baby. Paul prayed that his thorn in the flesh might be removed. Jesus prayed that the cup of suffering might pass from Him, and when He prayed for his disciples He must have mentioned them by name, one by one. If one would study the prayers of King David in the *Psalms* from the viewpoint of their content, he would be impressed with their specificity. For instance in Psa. 39:4 the poet prays: "Lord, let me know my end, and what is the measure of my days." They are sometimes surprisingly specific: "Set a guard over my mouth, 0 Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips!" (Psa. 141:2)

There is the story of a servant girl who was kept too busy to do much for her congregation. But she explained to an inquirer that she could at least pray for people at night when she went to bed. "I take the newspaper to bed with me," she explained, "and I read the birth notices, and I pray for the little babies who have just come into the world. I read the marriage notices, and I pray that God will give these people happiness. I read the death notices, and I pray that God will comfort those who are sad."

Many of our prayers are dull and void of vitality because they are so general and indefinite. It may sometime be in order to say "Bless the people of our great nation," but the appeal is more urgent and vital when we pray specifically for those who suffer because of delinquency and alcoholism, crime and injustice. To pray for the leaders of our country is always in order, but to do so by calling the President and one's representatives in Washington *by name* is more forceful. It is more precious when a brother prays for missionaries that he knows of *by name*, making reference to some of their specific problems, than when he simply prays for "all our missionaries everywhere."

Like Agur, it might be in order for us to keep a prayer list, whether mental or written. Agur may not have counted accurately, for he appears to have prayed for more than *two* things, but however many things he got right to the point when he addressed the Father. We too might pray: "Father, there are five people that I want to talk to you about this morning …" Or we might start by saying: "There are three things that are especially upon my heart tonight, 0 Lord …"

Perhaps the most meaningful prayers are not extemporaneous, meaning a prayer that is composed as one goes along, or on the spur of the moment. Especially would this be true of the regular seasons of prayer that we set for ourselves, such as morning and evening prayers. One disciplined in prayer might make a mental note (or a written one) during the

day to pray about a particular matter during evening prayer. There is of course an important place for *spontaneous* prayers, which might emerge from our souls at any time of the day. These are usually the most direct and specific of all our praying: maybe for the stranger that we just met or for those in a plane crash that we just heard about, or about an evil thought that we just had. We like to wait to pray about some matters in an unhurried season of prayer, and these are often matters that we pray about again and again. At other times we wish to pray as if our petitions were breaths of air emerging from the depth of our soul, and which may sometimes be as constant as breathing itself. It may be here that our communion with the Holy Spirit is the closest, and it may be what Paul had in view when he wrote: "Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication" (Eph. 6:18).

As exemplary as Agur's prayer is it is still not the prayer of a Christian, and there are observations that we wish to make that are especially related to a Christian's life of prayer.

1. *The frequency of prayer*

It is risky to try to prescribe for any saint a prayer timetable, or even to suggest the number of times he should pray each day. When I say each *day*, I am reminded of the statement in one of Alexander Campbell's sermons on prayer: "I could as easily believe that a man could live seven years without breathing, as a Christian live seven days without praying."

Paul would say: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). The primitive Christians probably continued their Jewish practice of "hours of prayer" three times a day (Acts 3:1), which goes back at least as far as Daniel, who got thrown in a den of lions because he continued such devotions in a pagan house of royalty, and David, who cried out: "Morning, noon, and evening do I cry unto thee." But he also said: "Seven times a day I praise thee for thy righteous ordinances" (Psa. 119:164).

Such instructions as to "Pray always" and "Pray without ceasing" mean at least that the Christian lives a life of prayer. Like his Lord, he will be in constant communion with God, and will pray about every aspect of life. He will not simply pray *for* others and *about* events, but his prayers will also be filled with praise and thanksgiving. Aristotle and the psychologists who have succeeded him have taught us that man is a creature of habit, and that his education is largely a matter of building good habits into his life. So Christian education may be viewed in terms of cultivating certain habits.

It is this sense that we can speak of prayer as *habitual*, and thus it seems consistent for the Christian to have set times to pray. Every Christian should have a few minutes each day *alone* with God, for there are things he needs to talk about that he wants only God to hear. Family prayers should also be daily, and of course "the prayers of the saints" will frequently be enjoyed in the ecclesia.

It seems especially appropriate for the Christian to think of his “hour of prayer” as an appointment with God, an engagement far more important than any other business he has that day. William Barclay tells the story of Bertram Polluck, a Bishop of Norwich, who was as busy as a bishop can be (without really trying!), and yet he set three times a day for prayer, and let nothing interfere. Once when the bishop was about to have a moment alone with God, an important visitor came asking to see him. Gently he said to his servant: “Put him in an anteroom, and ask him if he will please wait. I have an appointment with God.”

2. *The content of prayer*

“Is it something that I can pray for or about?” provides an acid test for a lot of things in our lives. If parents cannot pray for their child as he goes to a movie or a dance, or out with a particular gang, then maybe he ought not to be going. If we cannot talk with God about the new home we hope to buy, or a new car or furniture, or the vacation we have planned, then maybe we need to ask ourselves some more questions.

So this question, “Can I pray for it?”, goes a long way toward determining the content of prayer. Certainly we should pray for our loved ones, calling them by name, and sharing with God the difficulties that we all have in living with each other in this complex world. We should pray for those who misunderstand us, or who question our motives, or reject us because we are different. We should pray for *spiritual* wisdom and understanding as Paul did (Col. 1:19), realizing that *carnal* wisdom actually cuts us off from God. Like St. Francis, we should pray for the wisdom to realize that it is more important that we love than that we be loved, and more important that we understand than that we be understood. We should pray for insight into other people’s feelings and as to why they behave the way they do. This helps us not to impugn motives.

It is good for us to examine the great prayers of the Bible and notice their content, but the point here is not that we are necessarily to pray for and about the things they did, but that their prayers were relevant to their lives, and ours should be also. We are to pray about those things in our own world. Our prayers should be twentieth-century prayers, however rooted they may be in Biblical times.

What is sweeter than a young person praying for his grandmother as she encounters the predicament of old age, or a man praying for his buddy who got hurt on the job. It is surely precious to God when a teacher breathes a prayer before she goes to her classroom, asking that she might be a blessing to her students, whether she is teaching clothing or math, and it is especially precious when her prayer is a personal thing between her and God. Too personal to mention to others!

3. *The attitude of prayer*

Another hazard in our prayer life is to overemphasize the mechanics that are necessarily involved, such as the posture, place, tonality, length. I recall from my days at Freed-Hardeman College that we had a boy there from Ft. Worth who “prayed with his

eyes open." Someone must have peeped in order to find out, but find out they did. I remember how the word got around, "Did you know that Steve prays with his eyes wide open?" From that time on I checked to make sure my eyes were closed tight when the prayers were intoned!

But who says you have to close your eyes or bow your head? If one lifts holy hands in prayer to God, it would be awkward for him at the same time to lower his head and close his eyes. David could pray as he watched the stars, and the prayer of our Lord in John 17 begins with: "He lifted up his eyes to heaven and said …"

While posture is by no means an irrelevant point to prayer, it would be amiss to insist on anyone position. Kneeling is so appropriate that Paul used it almost as a synonym for prayer: "I bow my knees before the Father" he says in Eph. 3:14. It is as natural to bow before God as it is to stand before man. It hardly seems appropriate for a saint to steal away to his secret chamber for prayer, and then *sit down* and pray. In our busy lives we should find ourselves breathing prayers throughout the day in all sorts of positions, whether driving, walking, or flying in airliner. It does, however, conform to Biblical examples that whenever we assume a position for the purpose of prayer, especially our regular seasons of prayer, that we kneel before God.

I personally respond negatively to any special tonality in prayer. It gives me the creeps when someone, usually a professional minister who has had a course in seminary on "How to Pray in Public," shifts into a kind of Sabbatical tone when he begins his prayer. It sounds affected, and it tends to call attention to the mechanical. But perhaps he finds this meaningful to him, and I would not criticize him for it. But it isn't for me, and I have a little trouble involving myself in that kind of prayer.

But I do like the honorific Elizabethan style of saying "Thou" and "Thee" and "hast" and "didst," as awkward as these sometime seem. To me it is more reverent, and it constitutes terminology that we reserve only for God. It bothers me just a little to hear "Your will be done" instead of "Thy will be done." "Thou art God" says more to me than "You are God." But this is a matter of opinion and personal taste, and we must all leave each other free in such matters.

Prayer must not be viewed as some emergency measure. We should not think of it as a device to deliver us from some impending danger. It is rather a resource of power that gives us strength to meet the vicissitudes of life. It is a way of conquest rather than a path of escape. We have the wrong attitude about prayer if we think of it as the easy way out. For this reason it is better for us to pray that we might have the strength to bear a sorrow than to be delivered from it. Prayer is not some kind of magic. It does not do things for us as if it were a kind of divine Aladdin's lamp. It rather enables us to do things for ourselves. We might think of it as a rule of prayer that God does nothing for us that we can do for ourselves. Man's extremity is God's opportunity.

The most important thing you can do for someone is to pray for him, and the time spent in our own communion with God is the best investment of time we can make. And when we pray there is no petition more important than that one uttered by our Lord: "Thy will be done!" To pray that and to mean it will enable us to pray dangerously like Agur: "Feed me with the food that is needful for me." —*Editor*

This is sixth in a series of ten essays on *Resources of Power.* This volume of this journal will be issued in book form under that title early in 1967, attractively bound in hardback with dust jacket. It will be moderately priced. We will appreciate your reserving your copy now.

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BOOK NOTES

Voices of Concern is now out, and we have sold that hundred that we set out to sell before publication. Many others are selling the book also, of course, but we will appreciate your ordering from us, for while the profit is not much, it does help to keep *Restoration Review* in the black. The price is $3.50. We have one for you, and we will mail it the same day we get your order.

Knowing the mentality of its editor as I do, as well as a number of the writers, I expected the book to be good, but it has far surpassed my fondest expectations. It is first of all a very interesting book, filled with thrilling human interest stories. It reeks of drama. You might drop a tear when you read Bob Meyers' testimony in "Between Two Worlds," especially when he tells of how he "lay in a pup tent or on a cot many nights and cried quietly into my pillow because the house I had built was falling apart."

You will be enchanted by Laurie Hibbett's account of herself in an Episcopal cathedral, relating her life in the Church of Christ to her present situation, searching for something to say to "those people I claim most fully my own," and finding it as she reads from her prayer book and studies the likeness of angels on the stained-glass windows.

You will be astonished as you read William Floyd's reason "Why I Could Not Be a Career Preacher" in the Church of Christ, especially when your eyes fall upon paragraphs like this one:

> My father ministered to an Alabama congregation during the Birmingham riots. He preached on segregation, his text being: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." He was called a "son of a bitch" and a "devil" from the audience when he was delivering the sermon. When the elders defended his right to preach what he believed, the

> elders were dismissed by the men of the congregation and my father was fired. Why have more Alabama Church of Christ ministers not been fired? Where is the church of our group that is in danger of being burned because of its stand for decency?

And it will make your hair stand on end to read of his account of the politics that go on in the Christian colleges, his serving as the president of the student body of one of them. Yet brother Floyd remains a member of the church in Cookeville, Tenn., where John Allen Chalk is the minister. He hasn't left. He offers the most piercing criticism I have ever read, but all in an effort to arouse us to improve ourselves.

There is no keener analysis of our problems anywhere than in Norman Parks' essay on "Thy Ecclesia Come!" And you will not find a sweeter spirit anywhere than in Logan Fox's piece on "Destiny or Disease?" And you will meet with surprises, such as when one writer describes the ordeal of telling her minister how she felt compelled to leave the Church of Christ, only to discover that the minister himself desired to do the same thing, though he felt he could not do so due to those he might discourage.

And there is Pat Hardeman's provocative "Why?" and he does indeed tell *why.* It is interesting.

On and on it goes. There is lots of variety and diversity. Some are still quite young; some are aged. Several are PhD.'s, while others are strictly of "common cloth." Some are men, some are women. Some have left the Church of Christ, while others have stayed. Some are apparently as conservative as they ever were, relying upon the Bible for guidance as much as ever, while others reveal definite "liberal" tendencies. Some are cool, calculating, incisive; others are metaphysical, ever ready for a rendezvous with the Spirit.

The book is goodlooking, with attractive blue jacket and clear, crisp type. Even one who often reads proof copy could not find even one typographical error. There is indeed one grammatical error, a juicy one, in the Introduction, made by an English professor, mind you, and I must acknowledge that to be a real find. When I find an English prof in a grammatical error that really makes my day!

This book will help you to share a hope of better days to come for our people. We assure you that you will be stimulated and electrified, as well as touched and encouraged. As my wife puts it, noting that some of the essays are highly autobiographical and others not, "Each writer has his own way of really opening your eyes!" That says it better than I have put it. The book is an eye-opener. Guaranteed to pry open eyes!

OTHER BOOKS

An increasing number of our readers are using our Credit Plan, by which you can make larger purchases and pay at the rate of only $5.00 a month, or 10% of balance, whichever is higher. This enables you to buy a set of Barclay's *The Daily Bible Study,* a 17volume set,

beautifully bound, and the most readable and resourceful commentary on the New Testament that we know of. $39.50.

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Ketcherside's new volume, *The Paths of Peace,* is a reprint of *Mission Messenger* for 1961-62. This completes the six volumes that extend back to 1957. We can supply them all for $ I 9.50, and you can pay for them on the Credit Plan.

We highly recommend *The New Bible Commentary,* covering the entire Bible. There is no single volume that is packed with more helpful information, and it is high class, scholarly work. $7.95.

We have a new supply of the paperback editions of *The Fool of God,* which is the story of Alexander Campbell, and *Raccoon john Smith,* who was another of our great pioneers, both by Louis Cochran, at only $1.95 each.

No Issue of this journal during July and August. The next issue will be the September number. *Restoration Review* is published ten months of the year, 20 pages each time, making a 200 page volume by the year's end. Next winter we will publish "Resources of Power," which will be volume 8 of this journal in book form, with dust jacket and sturdy binding, at nominal price. Reserve your copy in advance. And why not now *renew* while you are at it?

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